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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Sub-Commission on Prevention of
Discrimination and Protection
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Fiftieth session
Agenda item 2

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDANT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Letter dated 24 August 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities

I am addressing you with reference to the Statement by the Chairman of the Sub-Commission of 21 August concerning the recent human rights situation in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. I must note with regret that individual members of the Sub-Commission are abusing this august body, imposing again unacceptable stands and assessments which are, first and foremost, detrimental for the reputation of the Sub-Commission itself.

It is my view that it is inadmissible for the Sub-Commission to be, once again, drawn into the political pressure campaign launched against FR Yugoslavia concerning the internal situation in the country.

The actual cause of the problem in Kosovo and Metohija is separatism based on terrorism. By boycotting political processes and legitimate State institutions whenever it suits them, ethnic Albanian political parties seek to create a distorted picture, whereby ethnic Albanian human and minority rights are threatened.

Proceeding from the multi-ethnic character of Serbia and FR Yugoslavia, the Government of Serbia is firmly committed to finding a political solution through dialogue. This dialogue should imply full respect for the territorial integrity of Serbia, guaranteeing equal civil and human rights to all citizens of Kosovo and Metohija, and the highest international level rights to the members of the Albanian national minority.

The current impasse in the dialogue initiated by President Milosevic and the Government of Serbia has come about as a result of the efforts of the Kosovo and Metohija ethnic Albanian political parties, which aspire to exercising intensified international pressure on Yugoslavia, instead of engaging in a serious dialogue about real problems which beset this Serbian province. Accordingly, extremists are encouraged in their schemes, with further escalation of terrorist activities ensuing.

Double-standard politics concerning terrorism is particularly detrimental in my view, since it severely impedes the international community's combating this danger looming over all of us. The attempts to make a distinction between "good" and "bad" terrorists, proclaiming as bad only those who directly jeopardize interests of certain countries, and labelling the others as "human rights fighters", while at the same time denying to other countries the right to fight terrorism in their own territory, are not based on any principles or facts, but on one-sided assessments, one's own interests and power politics.

Efficient fighting of terrorism implies an impartial approach by all States and international factors, cooperation on equal footing, respect for the Charter of the United Nations and for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. FR Yugoslavia will persevere in giving its full contribution to this effort.

In order to justify the uncalled-for pressure exerted on Yugoslavia, the media and the advocates of separatism play games with the numbers of refugees, alleging that Kosovo and Metohija are ethnically cleansed. As a matter of fact, the number of displaced persons is much smaller than alleged. The Government of Serbia has invited all displaced persons and refugees to return to their homes, guaranteeing their security and offering aid for the repair of damaged houses.

In conclusion, I wish to underscore that the Statement by the Chairman does not offer a realistic picture of the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija, while exaggerating the humanitarian problems there and exercising counter-productive pressure on FR Yugoslavia. The Governments of Serbia and FR Yugoslavia are resolute in their efforts to provide, as soon as possible,

conditions for a safe return of all, once the situation in the province improves, with terrorists neutralized. Tens of thousands of ethnic Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Turks, Roma and others have already returned to their homes in recent weeks, evidence of the efficiency of our efforts, an example to be followed by all displaced persons before the winter comes.

I would ask you, Mr. Chairman, to have this letter published as an official document, under Sub-Commission agenda item 2.

(Signed): Mr. Miroslav Milošević
Chargé d'affaires a.i.